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Service, Learning as an Integrated Experience in Middle School Education: An Introduction to Resources and Information

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Service Learning as an Integrated Experience in Middle School Education

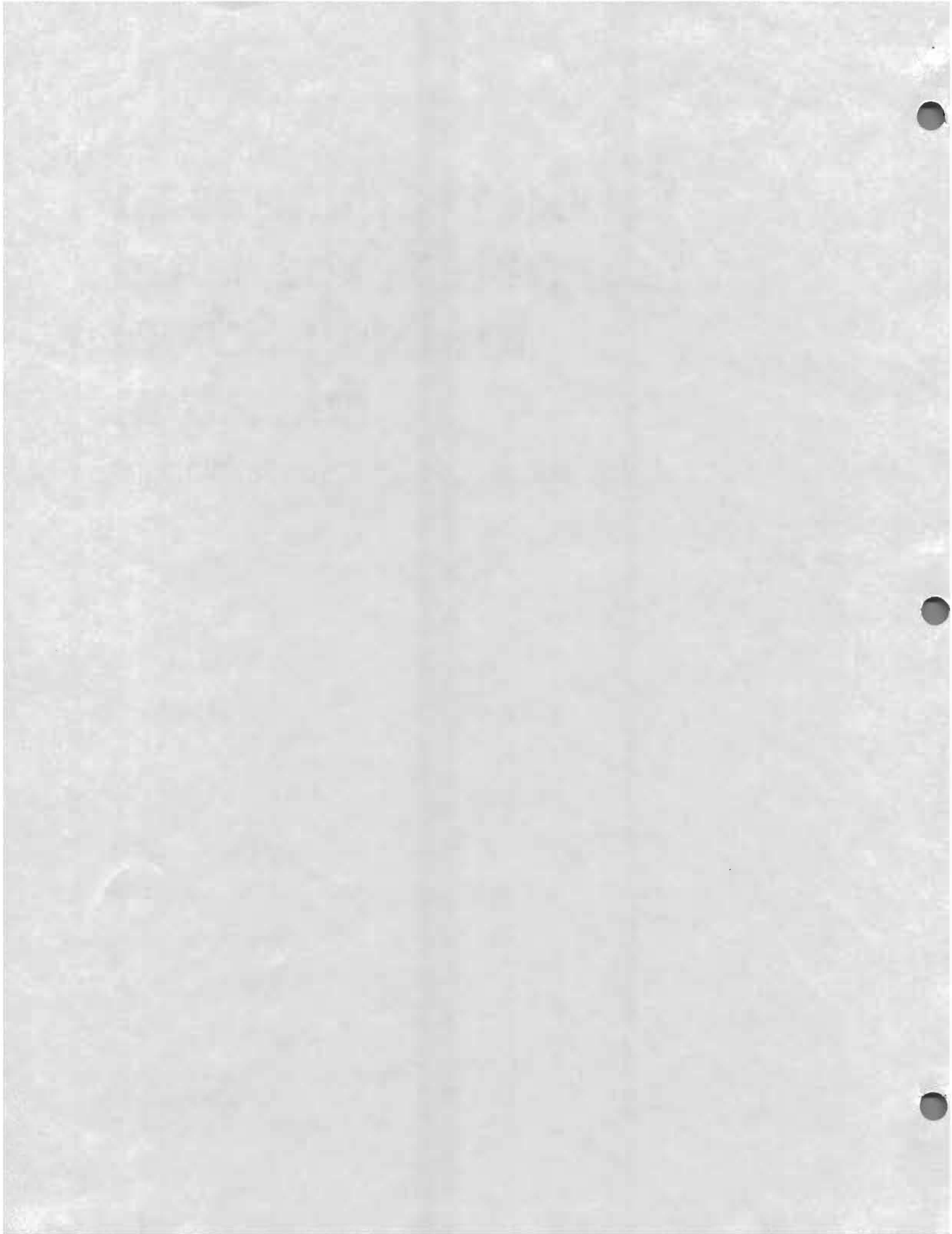
An Introduction to Resources and Information

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Middle School Packet

Introduction

- In Black Diamond, Washington, students are literally unearthing their history as they excavate a local “ghost town.”
- Students in Salt Lake City, Utah, helped clean up a hazardous waste site, passed two new laws, and planted hundreds of trees in their commitment to improve the environment.
- Students at Louis Armstrong Middle School (Queens, New York) are enrolled in a variety of service-learning programs. Two classes work with young children, one class works at a local daycare, and another is paired with a nearby first-grade elementary school class. Reluctant readers are building new relationships and are developing competence and leadership skills.
- As eighth-graders in San Antonio, Texas, serve as teachers to elementary school students, their own reading levels have gone up and the dropout rate has reduced from 86 to 6 percent.

These are just a few of the many ways service is enhancing learning and making communities a better place to live.

Why Service-Learning Is Appropriate for Middle School Youth

Middle school youth are going through immense physical and emotional changes. In its study *New Roles for Early Adolescents*, the National Commission on Resources for Youth strongly recommends that schools

develop programs which enable students to:

- Test and discover new skills.
- Develop a sense of competence, an “antidote to the self doubt of this period.”
- Socialize and try out different roles.
- Be exposed to a variety of role models, adults who represent different backgrounds and occupations.
- Speak and be heard so they can make a difference.
- Test their developing morality and value structure in authentic situations.
- Have tangible or visible outcomes, either of a short-term nature or divisible into clearly defined stages.
- Share in decision-making within appropriate parameters.

Service-learning can be a powerful way to implement these recommendations. The following indicates **Needs for Early Adolescents** followed by **How Service-Learning Responds**.

NEED: Test and discover new skills.

RESPONSE: Provides projects where students’ participation makes a clear difference.

EXAMPLES: Writing a story for a child in the hospital; teaching Spanish to a nursing home resident.

NEED: Develop a sense of competence.

RESPONSE: Provides projects which enable students to use the skills they are learning community settings.

EXAMPLES: Using math problem-solving skills to plan a community garden; reading a child’s story dramatically.

NEED: Exploration of roles.

RESPONSE: Provides projects where students experience a variety of roles. Service programs provide young people with meaningful work in which they are expected to perform in the role of leader and giver.

EXAMPLES: Being a leader with younger children; organizing a community event.

NEED: Shared Decision-Making

RESPONSE: Provides projects where students cooperate with others to realize a goal.

EXAMPLES: Organizing and promoting a recycling project; making a brochure and slide show about the neighborhood.

NEED: Active Learning with tangible outcomes.

RESPONSE: Provides a learning setting where students learn through community-based experiences.

EXAMPLES: Learning about plant growth and biology as they grow plants and restore stream banks; learning about the local history as they establish a tribal history museum.

NEED: Develop Moral and Value Structure.

RESPONSE: Develops the ability to interact and work with people different than themselves.

EXAMPLES: Developing relationships with senior citizens through partner programs; seeing the commonalities among people as they work with homeless children.

NEED: To be heard when speaking.

RESPONSE: Prepares students to become contributing citizens by teaching habits and skills of active citizenship fostering an ethic of service.

EXAMPLES: Gaining an understanding of city decision-making as they work on a task force to develop a teen center; developing an investment in their communities as they work with neighbors to make their housing project "gang free."

*Tell me and I forget.
Teach me and I remember.
Involve me and I learn.*

—ANONYMOUS

Options for Infusing Service

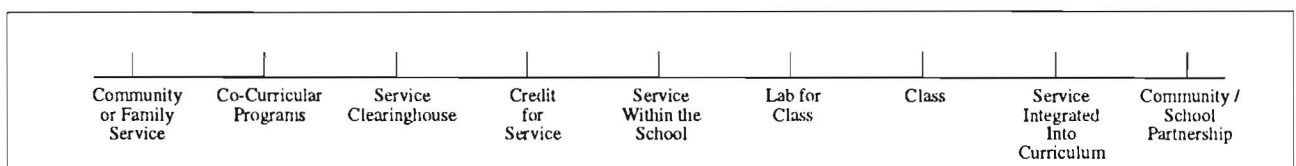
Schools throughout the state are implementing service using one or several of the following options:

- Community-based service.
- Co-curricular programs.
- Service clearinghouse at the school.
- Recognition for community involvement.
- Service within the school.
- Authentic application of classroom learning.
- A community service class.
- School-wide integration into the curriculum.
- Community/school partnerships.

These options are grouped on the continuum at the bottom of the page from left to right, roughly in order of their level of integration into the overall school curriculum.

Community-Based Organizations

A number of community-based organizations have a rich tradition of service, such as YMCAs, Scouts, Campfire, and 4H. Many school communities are beginning to work more collaboratively with these community-based organizations. These collaborations may occur during or after school hours.



Co-Curricular Programs

Most schools currently incorporate service into clubs and after-school activities. These activities are strictly voluntary, and students receive neither academic credit nor time off from school. Organizations such as Builders' Clubs plan and implement a variety of service projects. Many schools are developing their own service clubs and some are creatively involving parents.

Service Clearinghouse

Many schools help students connect with community service and leadership opportunities by providing information about community agencies and their service needs. For example, Alki Middle School (Vancouver) sponsors a Volunteer Involvement Fair. Through this event students become aware of volunteer opportunities available in the community.

Service Within the School

Students also make the school a better place for other students. They can help other students feel a part of the community. Because they remember all too well their feelings of anxiety and concern as they moved into the school, students often can become good mentors to students facing similar situations.

Tutoring as an Instructional Technique. Tutoring benefits everyone involved. Youngsters receiving tutoring not only gain extra individual attention and practice, but also friendship of an older person and role model. Student-tutors learn material better when they have to explain it to someone else, and they gain self-confidence by knowing they have something to offer others. Finally, teachers benefit when students help one another, especially in schools that are struggling to meet the diverse needs of youth. Experience has also taught that tutoring someone else can ignite a flame in an otherwise unsuccessful child. A Stanford University study conducted in more than 500 schools suggests that peer tutoring has a more cost-effective impact on student achievement than smaller class sizes and computer-assisted instruction.

Authentic Application of Classroom Learning

Because service can enliven classroom learning, middle school teachers throughout the state are developing ways to apply the skills and information they are learning to significant community needs.

Teaching others. Some students provide a service as they teach others what they are learning in their classroom. Students who are learning Spanish tutor English-as-second-language students, providing a much needed service as well as strengthening their own language skills.

Producing a helpful product. Some classes encourage students to develop products that are helpful to the school and community. Products could include books, computer programs, games, videos, plays, or murals.

Middle School students in Issaquah Middle School grow native plants for stream restoration. Students in Stocking, Michigan, write stories that are donated as a packet for new mothers to encourage them to read to their children. Students have documented their local history in a book which has been reprinted several times due to its popularity.

Addressing significant needs/issues. Still other programs encourage students to address a significant issue. Students in science class might collect and analyze data on local streams to determine the amount of pollutants. In a social studies class students might develop specific strategies for addressing prejudice in their own school.

A sixth-grade social studies class at Kopachuck Middle School provides a context for students to understand what it means to live in hungry, impoverished societies. After studying a variety of African countries that are experiencing famine, the students produced hunger notebooks which included information from national newspapers, magazines, TV stories, and other current information about the hunger issue. Following an Oxfam "hunger banquet," students collaborated with the Red Cross to help them in their quest to make a difference with penny bottles. Money was raised for hunger relief around the world, and Friendship Boxes were created for children in Somalia.

Examples of Service-Learning Within Various Curriculum Areas

Math. In Philadelphia's OASIS program, students learn math, science and basic skills as they have helped to construct community beautification projects.

Social Studies: Middle school students in Teens, Crime, and the Community at Morningside Middle School have built a greenhouse, hired a horticulturist, and are landscaping around buildings and along a number of community sites.

Language Arts. Eighth-grade youth at MS 115 in Bronx, New York, practice writing/reading skills in this cross-aged tutoring program with elementary-aged E.S.L. and Special Education students.

PE/Sports. Student designed and implemented a sensory obstacle course for PE class for blind students. After introducing students to what it's like to be physically challenged, they designed games that would be appropriate for disabled children and adults.

School-Wide Integration of Service into the Curriculum

Some schools ensure that service is a central part of the curriculum by teaching at various levels. Damascus Middle School incorporates Lion's Quest Skills for Adolescents, Skills for Growing into the district's drug and alcohol prevention program. Students gain experience in community building, communicating, interviewing, decision-making, building self-confidence, listening, validating others, taking responsibility, and cooperating. Each grade level has different service focus—environment, senior citizens, and homelessness and hunger—around which they apply the Quest Skills.

Integrated Curriculum

Because community issues rarely honor curriculum boundaries, service can be a powerful way to integrate content areas. As students address issues like homelessness, they need to use math, science, lan-

guage arts, and social studies skills. The following curriculum maps demonstrate how service can naturally link content areas.

Elements of Effective Programs

Preparation. Be sure to prepare students so they can effectively serve. Have students role-play situations they're likely to face. Many community agencies have activity or volunteer coordinators who are able to provide orientation sessions.

Meaningful roles for youth. Middle school students who are ready to take on significant projects need mentors and assistance for they can easily fall victim to communities and adults who don't take them seriously. Middle school youth—more than the cute children of elementary school or more than the competent high school students—need an adult who can help advocate for them with community members to expand their leadership and service opportunities.

Reflection. A critical component of all service learning is the opportunity to examine events and to distill important lessons. These activities ensure that students maximize the learning potential of service experiences. Have students explain projects they've done and why they were interesting and fun. The resource books listed at the end of this packet provide practical examples of reflection activities.

Effective Elements in Action

Preparation

1. Identify curriculum focus.
 - Write together as a class—refer back to this often. "Why are we doing this?" "What curriculum objectives do we want to learn through this project?"
2. Identify and analyze problems.
 - Collect newspaper articles—post on bulletin board.
 - Interview community leaders, teachers, parents, etc.
 - Survey service agencies/organizations, students, etc.
3. Select service project which links to course curriculum.

- Goals and needs come together
- List and post possibilities
- Discuss pros and cons
- Vote

4. Plan the project.

- Break the job down into
- Steps
- Timeline
- Resources
- Job Assignments

5. Identify skills needed for the project.

6. Prepare and train for service.

Meaningful Action

1. Direct service.
 - Tutoring, mentoring, visiting the elderly, etc.
2. Indirect service.
 - Drives, collections, fundraisers, cleanup, construction, environment, etc.
3. Advocacy
 - Lobbying, speaking, performing, etc.

Reflection

Reflection throughout a project motivates students to think about their decisions and actions as they serve. Sample reflective questions:

1. "Is our project going the way we want?"
2. "Have our feelings (about issues) changed?"
3. "What difference does my service make?"
4. "How did I apply my classroom learning to my service project?"
5. "What else can we do to help?"

Tips from the Field

Curricular Links

Help students see the connection between the service experience and the core content of your courses. Students and teachers might discuss the primary goals of the course and explore ways that community projects might teach or demonstrate the core skills and concepts of the curriculum.

Provide Safe and Successful Experiences

Consider safety and supervision requirements to ensure student success at service sites, especially when they're with younger children or frail adults. While you can never ensure that accidents won't happen, it's best for everyone's safety that details be thought through extensively. Work with the school principal and community site coordinators to determine if you adequately meet all liability requirements.

Remember the Details

Middle school students need support in remembering details, especially equipment, time of arrival, and arrangements for transportation. Even when students do a lot of the organizing, they may need a checklist or a "Plan of Action."

Encourage Participation

Encourage more active participation. You may subdivide the class into a variety of projects so that every student is actively involved and has peer support. Students could be responsible for the components, such as: Study, Action Research, Celebration, Public Relations, Recognition, Fundraising, Community Outreach, Team Management, and Permission Forms.

Build on Special Interests

While any number of service projects can be powerful experiences for preadolescents, young people at this age have a strong interest in working with projects that have a visible results:

- Environmental projects.
- Projects working with younger kids.
- Media or mural work that beautifies the community.
- Building playgrounds or equipment for special needs children.

- Working with disabled children, especially if it entails physical activities like sports.

While projects with senior citizens can be very valuable, those programs need tending and need to be done long-term to ensure that relationships can develop beyond their stereotypes.

Inclusive Groups

Young people like to have the opportunity to work with their friends or other people from their school. While some can clearly work alone on a voluntary basis, most feel more comfortable if they have friends of a similar age with them.

Recognition

Recognizing the efforts and results of the young people helps them realize that what they are doing is important. Several communities are doing service fairs, which provide opportunities for students to speak about what they've learned and accomplished. Celebration may include newspaper articles, displays in a bulletin board, articles in your school newsletter, a slide show, etc.

Clarify Commitment/Time Constraints

Should students come upon a project that is exciting to them and that demands additional time, you need to determine your willingness to provide needed support and leadership. If you can't, find someone else who can help for "serendipitous" experiences are often the most powerful for preadolescents who need to test their limits. Don't forget that parents, college students, or community leaders can provide the needed leadership if you can't.

Gaining Support From Students, Parents, and Community Members

Advocates for service-learning projects have stated that it's most helpful when student team leaders, parents, and the community are invited to attend informative planning meetings that clarify roles, expectations, and timelines of service-learning projects.

Parents can offer an abundance support such as project coordination of other volunteers, transportation, and soliciting for sponsors. Community members appreciate being involved in the planning so that it

provides the greatest impact, adequately prepares students, and ensures success.

Be Flexible

Community agencies frequently change personnel. If you plan to work over several years, expect some of the staffing to change. Should that happen, you need to reorient a new staff member to their roles and responsibilities. It's important that students understand that things may not go as planned. This is not a failure, but rather an opportunity to learn.

The very nature of experiential education limits your ability to control all elements of effort. As a teacher, you need to be open to questions and concerns that you may not have anticipated, but don't feel responsible for answering all of them. Instead, bring in resource people who can answer those questions.

Document: Evaluation and Assessment

Make sure you take care to evaluate the actual results of your program. Through interviews and assessments you can more effectively determine the actual benefits of your program. Some schools have incorporated service into their portfolio assessment programs, while others are developing ways to ways to assess academic and civic skills. Even though these methods are just in the beginning stages, they promise to provide helpful feedback to students and teachers alike.

Resources

Organizations

These organizations offer national trainings and opportunities to network with other service-learning teachers.

National Indian Youth Leadership Project. The NIYLP has pioneered the spread of service-learning into Native communities. As a regional center of the National Youth Leadership Council, NIYLP conducts camps based on their model in Native communities from Alaska to Maine and provide nationwide training. NIYLP was incorporated as a private, Indian-led nonprofit organization recognized by the U.S. Office of Indian Education as a model program.

National Service-Learning Coop., K-12 Service-Learning Clearinghouse. A national database of programs, trainers, peer consultants, and resources has been developed for educators, community organizations, and students. The National Cooperative includes eight Regional Technical Assistance Centers which provide assistance regionally. The Clearinghouse University of Minnesota Vocational and Technical Ed. Building 1954 Buford Avenue, R-290, St. Paul, MN 55108. 800-808-SERVE.

National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC). Local, regional, and national staff development offered to educators, youth professionals, and all those interested in youth service. NYLC, 1910 W. County Road B, Roseville, MN 55113. 612-631-3672 or 800-366-6952.

National Center for Service-Learning in Early Adolescents. The Center offers technical assistance, training and program development, and a variety of resource materials for middle educators and policymakers. They have an extensive database of middle/junior high school programs from throughout the country. NCSLEA, CASE/CUNY, 25 W. 43rd St., Ste 612, New York, NY 10036-8099. 212-642-2947, fax 212-354-4127.

Resources

Adventures of Adolescents by Catherine A. Rolzinski. Explores the experiences of seven middle school youth service programs. Make checks payable to Youth Service America, 1319 F Street, NW Ste 900, Washington, DC 20004. 202-296-2992. \$14.

Building A Culture of Service: Service Learning in Middle Schools by Carl Fertman, George White, and Louis White. National Middle School Association, 2600 Corporate Exchange Drive, Suite 370, Columbus, OH 43231. 800-528-NMSA.

City Youth Curriculum. A curriculum that teaches community action skills. Constitutional Rights Foundation, 601 South Kingsley Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90005. 213-487-5590.

Connections: Service Learning in the Middle Grades. National Center for Service Learning in Early Adolescence, CASE/CUNY, 25 W. 43rd St., Ste 612, New York, NY 10036-8099. 212-642-2946. \$15.

The Early Adolescent Helpers Program. Three resource books provide helpful training and support materials for establishing child care, latchkey, and senior partners programs. NCSLEA, CASE/CUNY, 25 W. 43rd St., Ste 612, New York, NY 10036-8099. 212-642-2946. \$20.

Enriching Learning Through Service. Provides a summary of the research that supports service and provides specific examples of how teachers have enriched their classroom learning through service. Project Service Leadership, 12703 NW 20th Avenue, Vancouver, WA 98685. 360-576-5070, fax 360-576-5068. \$12.50 + \$3.50 (S&H) payable to the School Improvement Project.

The Kids' Guide to Hunger. A comprehensive curriculum that integrates science and math into the study of

hunger. The overall themes are sources and distribution of food. 169 pages. Tucson Unified School District, Partners in Education Development, 1010 E. 10th St., Tucson, AZ 85719. 602-629-8277, fax 602-882-2479. Make check payable to Educational Enrichment Foundation. \$20.

Kid's Guide to Social Action by Barbara A. Lewis. Classroom guide to solving social problems and turning creative thinking into positive action. Free Spirit Publishing, 400 First Avenue N, Ste 616, Minneapolis, MN 55401-1724. 800-735-7323. \$14.95 + \$3.25 (S&H).

Learning by Giving. Curriculum for K-8 service. Filled with lesson plans and resource materials. National Youth Leadership Council, 1910 West County Road B, Roseville, MN 55113. 612-631-3672 or 800-366-6952. \$45.

Route to Reform: Service-Learning K-8 Curriculum Ideas by National Youth Leadership Council. Written by teachers from the Generator School Project, *Route to Reform* is meant as an idea book—not an exhaustive curriculum. Drawing on the strengths of both academic year and summer school program, it provides year-round ideas and sense of their adaptability across settings, seasons and timelines. The accompanying video also provides testimony to the effectiveness of service-learning. 127 pp. (1994) \$15. The book and “Route to Reform” video are \$25 as a set. NYLC, 1910 W. County Rd. B, Roseville, MN 55113. 612-631-3672, fax 612-631-2955.

Skills for Adolescence (grades 6-8), Quest International, Lions-Quest curriculum specifically teaches, reinforces, and enriches critical assets of young people's lives through comprehensive classroom curriculum focusing on life skills, active citizenship, and service to others. Must attend a 3-day workshop near your city. Cost is approximately \$400 for each person which includes training, curriculum and meals. To order, contact Quest International, 537 Jones Road, P.O. Box 566, Granville, OH 43023-0566. 800-446-2700, fax 614-522-6580.

Standing Tall Teaching Guide (grades 6-8). Activities that can be used by a classroom or club that teach the steps of powerful social action. It includes stories of “giraffes,” people who stick their necks out to help the

community. The Giraffe Project, P.O. Box 759, Langley, WA 98260. 360-321-0757. \$95 each + \$5 (S&H).

Student Detective Casebook: Discovering the World of Community Service Learning by Harry Silcox. Emphasizes the process of discovering a project by providing a format to uncover community issues and valuable resources. The Pennsylvania Institute for Environmental and Community Service Learning, 1600 Woodland Rd., Abington, PA 19001. 215-887-8170. \$39.95 (includes 35 student manuals and 1 teacher's guide).

VYTAL (Volunteer Youth Training And Leadership). A comprehensive collection of activities that enable students to see the value of service and to develop specific action plans. Manual available from VYTAL, c/o Greater Pittsburgh Camp Fire Council, Laura Tiedge, 730 River Ave., Suite 531, Pittsburgh, PA 15212. 412-231-6004. \$30.

What Works. Curriculum Units for Middle Schools. Order from The Center for Community and Service Learning, Carol Kinsley, 258 Washington Blvd., Springfield, MA 01108. 413-734-6857. \$25.

Whole Learning Through Service: A Guide for Integrating Service (K-8). Provides teachers with community service learning experiences that can be used to generate learning in content areas. Order guide from The Center for Community and Service Learning, Carol Kinsley, 258 Washington Blvd., Springfield, MA 01108. 413-734-6857. \$25.

Reflection

Learning Through Service. This guide helps teachers and community advisors to more effectively facilitate discussions and reflective activities. Project Service Leadership, 12703 NW 20th Avenue, Vancouver, WA 98685. 360-576-5070, fax 360-576-5068. \$5.50 plus \$2 (S&H) payable to the School Improvement Project.

A How to Guide to Reflection by Harry Silcox. This book explores the new service-learning movement and the use of reflective teaching as a critical component to

blending experience with school curriculums. Brighton Press Inc, 64 Lempa Rd, Holland, PA 18966. \$12.

Reflection: The Key to Service Learning. National Center for Service Learning in Early Adolescence. Outlines the ways reflection may be used to transform a community service or volunteer project into a quality service learning experience. CASE/CUNY, 25 W. 43rd St., Ste 612, New York, NY 10036-8099. 212-642-2946. \$15.

Special Education Curriculum. Maryland State Department of Education, 200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore MD 21201. 301-333-2427. Payable to MSSA. \$12.50.

Peer Assistance

Becoming a Friendly Helper: A Handbook for Student Facilitators by Robert D. Myrick & Robert P. Bowman, 1981. Educational Media Corp., P.O. Box 21311, Minneapolis, MN 55421. 612-781-0088.

Youth Helping Youth: A Handbook for Training Peer Facilitators by Robert D. Myrick & Tom Erney. Educational Media Corporation., P.O. Box 21311, Minneapolis, MN 55421. 612-781-0088.

Liability

Legal Issues for Service-Learning Programs by Anna Seidman and Charles Tremper, 1994. Nonprofit Risk Management Center, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW Suite 900, Washington, DC 20036. 202-785-3891, fax 202-833-5747. \$12.95 total.

No Surprises: Controlling risks in Volunteer Programs by Charles Tremper and Gwynne Kostin, 1993. Nonprofit Risk Management Center, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW Suite 900, Washington, DC 20036. 202-785-3891, fax 202-833-5747. \$12.95.

Videos

The Courage to Care: The Strength to Serve. Maryland State Dept. of Ed., 200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201. 301-333-2427. \$12.50 payable to MSSA.

Hearts and Minds Engaged. Project Service Leadership, 12703 NW 20th Avenue, Vancouver, WA 98685. 360-576-5070, fax 360-576-5068. \$10 plus \$3 (S&H) payable to the School Improvement Project.

Route to Reform: Service-Learning and School Improvement (video). This national video takes a close look at three exemplary school programs and answers: How can service experiences effectively integrate into curriculum? What is required of teachers, students and administrators? What are the challenges? What benefits can occur for students and communities when service and learning become one? \$15. NYLC, 1910 W. County Rd. B, Roseville, MN 55113. 612-631-3672, fax 612-631-2955.

